

Angels in the Magical Papyri

The Classic Example of Michael, the Archangel

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1. The aim of this study and some preliminary remarks

In order to write adequately about angels in the magical papyri,¹ authors must exactly be aware of what they are actually writing about. Some questions, which demonstrate the difficulties such a study might bring with it, must be answered prior to the writing process itself: how can 'angels' be defined? Who is regarded as an 'angelic being' in the sense of such a definition and who is not? What period of time and what geographical region does such a study cover? Which texts form the relevant corpus for such a study?

At a first glance, all these questions might raise hardly any trouble. But this is only partly true. The first question already offers severe problems, as for the Greco-Roman world of antiquity and late antiquity and the notions and beliefs found in some of the magical papyri it is not always self-evident who is an angel there and who is not. As all kinds of religious ideas from a Greco-Roman, an Egyptian, a Jewish, and a Christian background – to mention only the most prominent socio-cultural settings – interact with each other in a certain period of time, it is hardly possible to define today without much doubt whether an obviously 'spiritual' and 'celestial being' is actually (a) an angel, (b) a deity, or (c) a demon (in the modern sense of the word). 'Beings' bearing Egyptian names in the papyri are in particular problematic here, as the polytheistic belief(s) of the Egyptians merged with other religious notions. Then when Jewish and Christian ideas and contents had been mixed into that melting pot of conceptions and when Egypt had become for its most part a 'Christian' country, some of the former Egyptian deities might have been treated and regarded as 'angels' by some people, because for them they fulfilled the same duties and tasks angels

1 Still a very intriguing introduction is Brashear, *Greek Magical Papyri* 3382-3684. See further, for a Christian context, Aune, *Magic* 1507-1570.

traditionally did. Thus, the scope of research could be very vague and hard to define.

By focusing on a, if not *the* major figure among the angels usually addressed and dealt with, this problem can be solved: Michael, traditionally mentioned with the attribute 'archangel', stands out from the crowd, because he plays a vital role in many literary genres and texts from diverse backgrounds; and he is invoked in a remarkable number of magical papyri. Therefore, he embodies the ideal classic example from which conclusions and inferences can be drawn about 'angels in the magical papyri', which can be generalized afterwards. With this limitation to only one 'angel', Michael, and by focusing on the magical papyri as the pivotal texts, the period of time and the geographical region for this study suggest themselves almost automatically: most of the papyri relevant for the topic of this study have been found in Egypt and derive from (late) antiquity; some of them may also represent Coptic Christianity, because they are written in Coptic and not only in Greek.²

In sum, in this study the main focus is on specific archaeological artefacts, papyri, which (a) derive from a magical background or serve a magical purpose and (b) mention the archangel Michael explicitly. With these direct testimonies of real people from (late) antiquity at hand, the role and function Michael has in the magical papyri can be described. Besides, the ideas and notions held by the people behind the papyri will become apparent, if not even the people themselves to a certain degree do as well.³ Finally, all of this may be generalized and serve as a starting point for a general assessment of 'angels in the magical papyri'; but this is the task to be performed in a study which will have the dimension of, at least, one monograph.

Nonetheless, there are three aspects that must be addressed as far as methodology is concerned prior to describing and discussing some of the most significant features of the texts of the relevant magical papyri.

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- 2 However, language is one of the crucial points in studying magical papyri, because they contain names, invocations, *voces magicae*, and so on in an often confusion mélange of languages or even dialects. For instance, Demotic or Hieratic and even Hebrew or Aramaic is shining through here and there. For the demotic magical papyri see Johnson, Introduction to the Demotic Magical Papyri lv-lviii.
 - 3 It might still be surprising that the benefit from research into the magical papyri has not widely been acknowledged, such as it was already expressed by Dieterich (Religion 486-487) more than a century ago: "Es nimmt mich immer wieder wunder, dass der unermeßliche Gewinn, der aus den Zauberpapyri nach so vielen Seiten hin zu erlangen ist, nur so wenige Arbeiter lockt." See Betz, Introduction xliii-xliv, li-lii n. 29 and 32, who explicitly refers to Dieterich (quotation taken from li n. 29).

(a) The 'magical papyri' form a merely artificial corpus of texts.⁴ Papyri categorized as 'magical papyri' can be so distinct from each other that one is an amulet with extracts from literary works written by a professional scribe and another contains some *voces magicae* and a short invocation only in a clumsy and untrained hand. The 'magical papyri' known today are only the remains of a much larger number of manuscripts that vanished due to suppression, persecution, and destruction.⁵ In addition, what we have today as published collections with 'magical papyri' depends on modern criteria for categorizing papyri. Although genre and conventions certainly play a role — to write, for instance, a specific invocation against fever implies that people stuck to traditional elements and formulae —, a magical papyrus was designed for an individual and represents a unique testimony to its time and the people living then. In addition, amulets with prayers, liturgical sequences, or biblical texts, to mention only a few categories, were often excluded from collections with 'magical papyri'. This is partly true for the following titles the present study mainly relies on: Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae (PGM)*,⁶ Daniel / Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum (Supp.Mag.)*, Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation (PGM [Betz])*, and Meyer / Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic (ACM)*.⁷

(b) Magical 'papyri' are archaeological artefacts that are not only produced from the papyrus plant (*Cyperus papyrus*). In papyrology the term 'papyrus' does just partly refer to the writing material, so that this academic discipline is concerned with parchment, ostraca (potsherds), *tabulae* and *lamellae* (out of wood, lead, silver, bronze etc.). Thus, it is not surprising that magical 'papyri' come in different forms and materials.⁸

(c) 'Magical' papyri must not be misjudged in a pejorative sense as testimonies to a primitive or heretic form of religious belief that are in

4 See, for instance, Betz, Introduction xli: "'The Greek magical papyri' is a name given by scholars to a body of papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt containing a variety of magical spells and formulae, hymns and rituals."

5 See Brashear, *Magical Papyri* 27-28; Betz, Introduction xli. In more detail about the destruction of books, see Speyer, *Büchervernichtung*; Speyer, *Zensur*.

6 A third volume of *PGM* was on its way with galley proofs ready when the publishing house of Teubner in Leipzig was destroyed at the end of 1943. Cf. Preisendanz, Vorrede, in the second edition of *PGM* Vol. 2 (by A. Henrichs), VII-XVII. Fortunately, the proofs survived and have been distributed among scholars since then. See Betz, Introduction xliv, lii.

7 Although in principle it focuses on *PGM* and *Supp.Mag.*, Delgado, *Léxico*, is a very helpful tool for finding specific lexemes in the magical papyri.

8 Cf. Kraus, *Pergament* 425-432, and in English (with *addenda*) Kraus, *Parchment* 13-24.

contrast to a (more or less) well-developed and orthodox counterpart. Such a distinctive dichotomy is the product of modern thinking. Moreover, 'magical' papyri are indispensable direct and original witnesses to a world in which such a clear-cut distinction was not decisive, probably even not important for the common people, or they were not aware of anything like that at all.⁹

2. Michael, the archangel – a brief survey of various 'corpora' and contexts

Michael¹⁰ is the most prominent among all the angels as far as his mention in Jewish and Christian texts is concerned. He is the patron angel who speaks up for Israel (Dan 10:13,21; 12:1; 1QS 3:20; 1QM 17:6; 1En 20:5), he functions as one of the archangels (1En 20:5,8; 71:3; 2 En. 22:6; 4 Bar. 9:5; Jude 9), and thus is "a member of the higher ranks in the celestial hierarchy"¹¹ in front of the throne of God. As the leader of the angels he leads the battle against Satan (1QM 9:15-16; 17:5-7; Rev 12:7-8). According to Jude 9 Michael contends with the διάβολος and disputes about the body of Moses.¹²

In the so-called Pseudepigrapha¹³ Michael is the "gatekeeper of the kingdom of the heavens" (3Bar 11:2: Μιχαήλ ὁ κλειδοῦχος τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν) and the "prince" or "commander(-in-chief)" (3Bar 11:8 etc.: Μιχαήλ ὁ ἀρχιστρατηγός; see T. Ab. A 2:1 etc.¹⁴) and, thus, has a predominant role. He is the one who accompanies Baruch on his journey

9 See, for instance, Bremmer, Birth (1999) 1-12, and Bremmer, Birth (2002) 1-11, 276-271; Betz, Magic 244-259; Betz, Introduction xli-lxiii; Kraus, Manuscripts 230; Kraus, Amulette. This issue is a crucial one, as Betz (xlix n. 6) correctly states: "In order to provide an adequate definition [of magic; added by the author of this study], the complexities of the notion, its relations with 'religion' and 'science,' and the rather frustrating history and literature of the problem would have to be discussed first."

10 For general information see Lueken, Darstellung; Michel, Engel 243-251; Balz, Μιχαήλ 1066; Rohland, Erzengel; Danker, Lexicon, s.v. ἀρχάγγελος and Μιχαήλ; Aune, Revelation 6-16, 693-695; Allison, Testament 74-77 (Michael as ἀρχάγγελος and ἀρχιστράτηγος).

11 Danker, Lexicon, s.v. ἀρχάγγελος.

12 See Kraus, Manuscripts 258-259. On Jude 9 in this respect see Bauckham, Jude 65-76; Wasserman, Epistle 67, 69-70; Kraus, Sprache 372. Jude 9 probably originated from a lost text in *Ascen. Isa.* or, as Bauckham, Jude 235-280 argues, from the lost ending of *T. Mos.* Further see Deut 34:5-6; Philo, *Mos.* 2.291.

13 According to Charlesworth, Old Testament xxiv-xxv (in each of the two volumes).

14 It is a matter of interest that Michael is addressed as ἀρχιστράτηγος more than sixty times in recension A, while this is the case in B only for 1:1 and 14:6 in a few manuscripts. See Allison, Testament 75.

to the heavens (3*Bar*; see also the Slavonic tradition), who receives the “virtues of the just” (3*Bar* 12:5), and who commands the other angels; and he is the one who interacts with Abraham by showing him heaven, earth and the judgement, and by discussing and praying with him (*T. Ab.*). Further, he delivers a magical ring from God to Solomon that should protect and help him to bind evil demons (*T. Sol.* 1:6-7). Other (arch)angels are of minor importance, such as Dokieli (ὁ ἀρχάγγελος Δοκιήλ), Puriel (ὁ ἀρχάγγελος Πυρουήλ), and Uriel, to mention only three of them.¹⁵ In the Christian texts classified as ‘apocryphal’ Michael’s role and function are similar to that: as the commander of the angels he is of extraordinary importance, guides the just (above all, Adam and the patriarchs) into Paradise (*Christ’s Descent into Hell* IX [XXV]; *Apoc. Paul* 14, 22, 25-26; *Gos. Bart.* I 1), opens up Isaiah’s tomb on the third day (*Ascen. Isa.* III 16), has a pivotal role in an encounter with Satan (previously called Satanel) before that was cast down together with other angels (*Gos. Bar.* IV 52-56; further, Michael was the second angel to be formed after Satan, cf. IV 28-29), is the commander-in-chief (*Ep. Apos.* 14 [25]), and shows compassion for humans and speaks up for them (*Apoc. Paul* 43; see also 48 where Michael, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the other just weep for the Son of God at the cross).

It is not surprising that what we know and may deduce from the relevant biblical passages prompted writers to expatiate upon Michael’s role and function in order to tell more vividly and in more illustrating details about the archangel. By doing so they enlarge what is only briefly mentioned in the biblical texts or is even just implied by them. Consequently and as a result of these popular texts, Michael has been widely addressed on amulets, for example, in the form of seals, medals, or rings. This again is no surprise, because in the *Testament of Solomon* Michael passes on a magical ring from God to Solomon that is meant to protect its wearer. With its engraving this ring could be used to control and even bind all the male and female demons at work in the world (*T. Sol.* 1:6-7).¹⁶ This, however, is not the only background for confronting in particular Michael, the archangel, with requests of protection against evil powers, including diseases, as can be seen by Michael’s other roles and functions that were in short delineated above.¹⁷

15 About Puriel (*T. Ab.* 13:11) see Allison, *Testament* 290-291. Uriel plays a decisive role in 4 *Ezra* and is significant in 1*En*. Moreover, magical papyri mention Uriel as well. See *Suppl. Mag.* I 10.4; 32.11; II 92.5; *P. Med.* I 20.

16 Thereafter the bound demons help to “build Jerusalem when you [Solomon; added by the author of this study] bear this seal of God”. See Duling, *Testament* 962 (further, about binding demons, 963 n. p). Duling also writes about the angelology in *T. Sol.* (953). On Solomon’s ring see also Russell, *Context* 39; Johnston, *Testament* 36-37.

17 Still instructive in this respect is Wallis Budge, *Amulets* 10-11, 40-43, 195-197, 374-375.

3. Michael, the archangel, in the magical papyri

Of course, with all that data in mind it is only natural that Michael¹⁸ is especially apt for being used in the magical papyri, too. That is why the archangel's function and role is referred to in contexts thematically analogous to those already mentioned. Nonetheless, apart from such similar and parallel usages, the magical papyri also contain striking and baffling features Michael is connected with; and these originate from non-Jewish and / or non-Christian settings. This interrelation of ideas and beliefs of diverse religious backgrounds might come as a surprise to some readers and may be unanticipated or even repugnant to others,¹⁹ when early Christians form invocations in a syncretistic, heretic, or, generally speaking, mere non-Christian way by including corresponding names and contents taken from other religious conceptions.

The papyri and their texts themselves, however, are to a greater than lesser extent direct and original expressions of the beliefs and ideas of common people in Greco-Roman Egypt, who were influenced by various religious views that they often intermingled with each other; and this is the socio-cultural setting the magical papyri looked at here stem from, i.e. an inter-religious context or, in other words, a melting pot of diverse and often disparate religious conceptions or just loose ideas. Thus, the texts can hardly be attributed unambiguously to Egyptian or Greco-Roman religion, Judaism, or Christianity, because they often are more or less mixtures of many religious beliefs that cannot be told apart from each other anymore.

3.1 In general: Michael's role and function in the magical papyri

In principle, magical papyri list Michael among the archangels²⁰ that are addressed without providing any further detail about his specific

18 This solely refers to the archangel Michael. The personal name Michael is found in documents, too. Further see, for instance, the end of *ACM* 86.

19 Such an attitude becomes evident in a positive evaluation of magical texts by Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Reden* 254-255. See Betz, *Introduction* xliii and li.

20 In the magical papyri the names of the archangels vary. Only Michael and Gabriel are mentioned in the biblical writings (Raphael in *Tobit*). Usually the archangels are seven in number and the missing four names are taken from the *Pseudepigrapha* (for example, Souriel, Uriel, Raguel, Anael, etc.). See *ACM*, 390 s.v. Archangels and *ACM* 91. Further see *PGM* P21, an invocation to God from about 300 CE, mentions Michael twice at second place in a list of archangels (Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Saruel, Raguel, Nuriel, and Anael).

role and function. Nonetheless, the context itself suggests significant insights into the ideas and notions people linked with their invocations and requests. *Supp.Mag.* I 10 (= *PGM* [Betz] CV 1-10, translated by R. Kotansky), an amulet against fever from the 3rd or 4th century, opens up with a list of names for god (or gods; 'Adonai Eloai Sabaoth, Ablanathanable', and so on) and then with the angels Uriel, Michael, Gabriel, Souriel, and Raphael. Before the textual body of the papyrus amulet starts there are the drawing of a snake, *voces magicae*, and magical signs (including divine names again, among them 'Iao Sabaoth'). "Protect Touthous ... from all shivering and fever" (φυλάσσεται Τουθοῦν κτλ. ἀπὸ παντὸς ῥίγους καὶ πυρετός) is the desire expressed here, no matter which one ("tertian, quartian, quotidian, daily, or every other day"²¹). Such a sequence of textual elements is typical of certain protective (= apotropaic) papyri. The first charm of *Supp.Mag.* II 92 1-13 (= *PGM* [Betz] XC 1-13, translated by H.D. Betz) from the 4th or 5th century invokes the name Michael thrice before listing Raphael, Uriel, Elelyth and later on other names and Iao Sabaoth (see also *ACM* 117 that has Michael named twice before other names starting with 'M' are listed).²² Michael is also the first in a long list with twenty-three names ending with -el in *ACM* 71, a Gnostic tractate against the powers of evil, although Gabriel is central,²³ who is invoked several times, and not Michael. Moreover, the archangels are also mentioned in Coptic magical papyri regularly (see below for Coptic curses).²⁴

ACM 116, a Coptic 'spell for power to dominate adversaries', summons Michael, the archangel. The person speaking out the spell wants to receive the services of the Egyptian powers of darkness (Elouch,

21 This refers to the climax of the attack of fever or shivering, whether it occurs, in other words than above, "every third, every fourth, every day, daily, or every other day". It is not clear if there is any difference between καθημερινόν ("quotidian" or "every day") and ἡμερησίως ("daily"). The first may emphasize the return of the chill every day whereas the latter could highlight the continuation of the fever.

22 Without clear specification of Michael's role and function is also *PGM* XXIIa 23-26 (= *PGM* XXIIa 18-27, translated by J. Scarborough), where Michael is "honoured" (see the sequence Iao, Sabaoth, Lailam, Barbaras. Michael, Gabriel, and first-person speaker)

23 See *ACM* 43 ('Book of ritual spells for medical problems') from a Coptic book, in which Gabriel plays the dominant role and is addressed as "Lord Gabriel" or just "Gabriel" to heal the patients. Only later on Michael is mentioned once ("Greetings, greetings, Michael, greetings, Gabriel, greetings Semesilamps"). Further see *ACM* 71 ('Gnostic tractate against the powers of evil') and 73 ('erotic spell of Cyprian of Antioch' from the 11th century). In that respect *PGM* VII 1009-1016 (= *PGM* VII 1009-1016, translated by W.C. Grese), a divination by a dream, addresses Sabaoth, Michael, Raphael, and, set apart from them, Gabriel who is probably denominated as "powerful archangel" though the text must be reconstructed here because of lacuna.

24 See, for instance, *ACM* 80; 81; 125; 129; 131; 134.

Belouch, and Barbarouch) that can be very hazardous. Thus, Michael is significant for keeping these dangerous powers under control, no matter if they stem from another religious background or not. Late in time but nonetheless interesting for a study of angels in the magical papyri that focuses on the archangel Michael is ACM 135 (a sixteen pages long parchment book from the 10th century) that bears the title “The Praise of Michael the Archangel”. There Michael is a winged angel with a chariot and a wand of power who praises God in accordance with phrases from the Old Testament, for example from the Book of Genesis, and with a repetitive formula (“I adjure you”). That formula recurs for the spirit, the earth and the seven gates, the chorus of the stars of heaven, the names of several angels, the archangels, the image of the cross, and many other beings and things. Unfortunately, this parchment book was lost during World War II.

In PGM III 129-164 (= PGM [Betz] III, translated by J.M. Dillon), also known as ‘Papyrus Mimaut’, an opisthographic papyrus roll probably from the early 4th century CE, Michael is also one among many others who are invoked, and the papyrus presents a similar sequence of elements. This elaborate charm — although it is not clear what it explicitly should help against²⁵ — addresses “the greatest in heaven ... by the god Iao, by the god Abaoth, by the god Adonai, by the god Michael, by the god Souriel, by the god Gabriel, by the god Raphael, by the god Abrasax Ablathanalba Akrammachari, by the lord god, Iaioi, ...” Again Michael is mentioned together with other archangels, but here mentioned first. Besides, the archangels are integrated into a row together with gods (there are still some to follow) of various origins and even themselves invoked as deities (θεοῦ Μιχαήλ) by a first-person speaker with the name Adam.

Another connection with Abrasax (or Abraxas), a very popular deity in magical contexts often depicted as an armoured creature with snake-like legs and the head of a cock,²⁶ is presented by PGM I 262-347 (= PGM [Betz] I, translated by E.N. O’Neill), a lamp divination named after the god Apollo (or, in other words, the papyrus is about how to prepare a very specific offering). It is part of a papyrus roll from the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century. In the hymn (298-327) Apollo is called, Zeus mentioned, and then Michael, Gabriel, Abrasax, Adonai, Pakerbeth, Aion, Adonaios, and Eloaios are addressed, so that

25 At the end “the ritual of the cat” it is mentioned that should be “a charm to restrain charioteers in a race, a charm for sending dreams, a binding love charm, and a charm to cause separation and enmity.”

26 For a concise explanation with references to some relevant literature, see PGM [Betz], 331.

they may come or do something. While Gabriel is simply named as archangel, Michael holds the attribute of the one who is invoked together with Iao, with whom he “rule[s] heaven’s realm” (300-301: Ἰάω, καὶ σὲ τὸν οὐράνιον κόσμον κατέχοντα, Μιχαήλ). More important than the link with Abrasax and other Egyptian deities is here that Michael (and Gabriel) is involved in a lamp divination that apparently presents a lot of similarities with the cult of Apollo.²⁷ The papyrus roll *PGM* II from the 4th century CE presents a *πράξις* for obtaining prophecies or oracles. In lines 150-182 (= part of *PGM* [Betz] II 64-183, translated by J. Dillon and E.N. O’Neill) the papyrus offers an obscure rite for ritual purity of the doorpost. One of the inscriptions should include *voces magicae* and names of deities, among which Abrasax and Michael are mentioned, although not in close proximity. Here Michael is the only archangel who should help to purify the bedchamber. Moreover, this papyrus, as the previously discussed, manifests a relation with the cult of Apollo (cf. lines 1-11 and 101-140).

The Great Magical Papyrus of Paris, *PGM* IV, a papyrus codex from the (early) 4th century CE, mentions in lines 1815-1820 (= part of *PGM* [Betz] IV 1716-1870, translated by E.N. O’Neill) Thouriel, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Misael, Irrael, and Istraël, whose names should be inscribed on a golden leaf, so that the wearer may benefit from them. It is interesting that then “the immortal and infallible strength of God” (τὴν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἄπτωτον ἰσχὺν τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλῶ) is summoned by the speaker. In another passage from the same magical book it becomes evident that Michael plays a predominant role among the angels addressed. In lines 2355-2356 (= part of *PGM* [Betz] IV, 2241-2358, translated by E.N. O’Neill), the end of a spell in iambic trimeters, it reads (after *voces magicae* or / and magical names): “Harken-techtha, who sits beside Lord Osiris, Michael, Archangel of angels, the god who lights the way, perform for me” (Ἀρκεντεχθα, τῷ κυρίῳ Ὀσίριδι ὁ παραφαίνων θεός, τέλει μοι, Μιχαήλ, ἀγγέλων ἀρχάγγελε). Harkentechtha is a god sitting next to Osiris. It might be astounding that the archangel Michael is immediately following the two of them, as delineated above in the cases of the interrelation with Apollo and Abrasax. Besides, *PGM* VII 257, an opisthographic roll from the 3rd century CE, contains a collection of magical recipes and the like. In lines 255-259 (= *PGM* VII 255-259, translated by W.C. Grese) the lamp that is addressed should “shine beside Osiris and ... Osirchentechtha and my lord, the archangel Michael.” The fragmentary *Supp. Mag.* II 93 from the 4th or 5th century is a lamp divination with Osiris and Michael mentioned directly after each

27 According to O’Neill, in: *PGM* I. 262-347 10 n. 50.

other (καὶ τῷ κυρίῳ Ὀσίριδι καὶ τῷ ἀρχαγγέλῳ Μιχαήλ).²⁸ PGM XXIIb, two leaves from the 4th or 5th century, is similar in line 29 (= part of PGM XXIIb 27-31, translated by D.E. Aune; a request for a dream oracle, addressed at a lamp), but it even connects Osiris and Michael more densely: “Be well, O lamp, who light the way to Harsentephtha and to Harsentechtha, and to the great [father] Osiris-Michael.” Especially τῷ μεγάλῳ [πα]ρτ[ι] Ὀσίριδι Μιχαήλ is striking and clear proof of an intertwining process of religious ideas and beliefs that may be called syncretistic from a modern perspective. These examples are clear evidence of a specific interrelation between Michael and Osiris.

Later on in the Great Magical Papyrus of Paris (PGM IV 2768-2771) Michael’s role is specified in a love spell of attraction (see Rev 12:7): καὶ Ὀρίων καὶ ὁ ἐπάνω καθήμενος Μιχαήλ· ἐπὶ τὰ ὕδατων κρατεῖς καὶ γῆς, κατέχων, ὃν καλέουσι δράκοντα μέγαν. “And Orion and Michael who sits on high: you hold the seven waters and the earth, keeping in check the one they call the great serpent.”²⁹ This specification is in the midst of magical words and names. Similarly, PGM XIII 928 (= as a part of PGM XIII 734-1077, translated by M. Smith) from 346 CE points out that Michael, the “the great commander-in-chief, lord, the great archangel of Ieou ...” (τοῦ μεγάλου ἀρχιστρατηγοῦ Μιχαήλ, κύριε, ὁ μέγας ἀρχαγγελος τοῦ Ἰεοῦ κτλ.), was responsible for what happened. Thus, Michael’s importance is explicitly emphasized by the attributes mentioned.

In other magical papyri Michael is invoked in order to help in individual cases against this or that: *Supp.Mag.* I 32 from the 4th or 5th century is a charm against eye disease in which the archangels Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael are invoked in order to get rid of the pain caused by the ailment. The papyrus includes the *trisagion* and another angel, Toumiel.³⁰ An ‘exorcist spell to drive evil forces from a pregnant woman’ (ACM 64) in Coptic with a drawing mentions Iao Sabaoth and the archangels Michael and Gabriel (“Protect, shelter her, Iao Sabaoth ... archangel Michael, Gabriel, helper”) followed by a list of names including Abrasakks (Abrasax) and the archangels. However, Michael is the more important archangel, because his power should be sent (“the

28 Although the Greek text is fragmentary here and the text is only a reconstruction (without indicating doubtful and missing letters here), one may follow Daniel and Maltomini and to think of “Harnechtha and Osirchentechtha (?) and” before the text given above.

29 E.N. O’Neill, PGM IV 2708-2784 90 translates “Both Orion and Michael ...” However, that might imply that both of them are in control of the waters, the earth, and the serpent (or ‘dragon’, according to Danker, *Lexicon*, s.v. Μιχαήλ), whereas κρατεῖς and κατέχων are singular. Moreover, in regard to Rev 12:7 it appears to be more likely that only Michael is in control of everything here.

30 For this angel (and others) see Schwab, *Vocabulaire* 375; Davidson, *Dictionary* 293.

power of Michel the archangel, who came from heaven and offered salvation"; lines 95-100).

A very special case seems to be that of *Supp.Mag.* II 61 (= ACM 29) from the 4th century CE: Mesa's curse against Philadelphie and her children. With this we have an incident of aggressive magic that is directed against somebody else to harm this person and, here, even her children. The papyrus starts with three crosses and then (in a very faulty orthography that is corrected here) ἅγιος ὁ θεός, Γαβριήλ, Μιχαήλ, ποίησον τὸ ἱκανόν μου "Holy God, Gabriel, Michael, give me satisfaction." God is asked to strike down Philadelphie and her children. Nevertheless, in Coptic papyri Michael often has his share of work to do against the person the curse is directed at, with one or more other archangels participating (see ACM 91; 93; 100; 101) or without any (ACM 105; without Michael ACM 92, which has Raphael first and then, after Adonai and Sabaoth, Temeluchos).

However, the term ἀρχάγγελος is not exclusively applied to Michael and the other known archangels. *PGM XIII* (for details, see above) reads in lines 257-258: φάνηθί μοι, ὁ ἀρχάγγελος τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν κόσμον, αὐθέντα Ἥλιε, ὁ ὑπ' αὐτὸν τὸν ἕνα καὶ μόνον τεταγμένος: "Appear to me, O archangel of those subject to the cosmos, ruler Helios, set in authority under the One and Only Himself." That Helios is addressed as archangel might appear bizarre and obscure, but the interrelations between Michael and Apollo, Abrasax, and Osiris have already shown that there is nothing extraordinary in such a connection. This again manifests how easily people in Greco-Roman Egypt exchanged roles and functions and intermingled names and religious conceptions with each other. So, this case is nothing exceptional as *PGM IV* (see above) documents in lines 482-484 (in *PGM [Betz]* translated by M. Meyer): as part of an invocation to 'Providentia and Psyche' it is "the great God Helios Mithras" who "ordered to be revealed to me by his archangel" the mysteries of the spell that follows. In *PGM XIV*, a Demotic papyrus book from the 3rd or 4th century, one of the three Greek passages includes Helios and the term archangel, too (line 5 = *PGM [Betz]*, to be found at *PDM XIV 105*, translated by W.C. Grese): Ἥελιον· ἀνάπεμψόν μοι ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ τοῦτῃ τὸν ἀρχάγγελόν σου Ζεβουρθαυνην κτλ. Here the sun is mentioned, but the one who should send the archangel is also the one who is "seated in impenetrable darkness and ... in the midst of the great gods" (line 1 = *PGM [Betz]*, to be found at *PDM XIV 101*). Besides, *PGM VII* (see above) contains a partly fragmentary 'favour and victory charm' of the deity Helios (= *PGM [Betz]* VII 1017-1026, translated by R.F. Hock) that refers to Michael as well. The reconstructed text starts like this: Χαῖρε Ἥλιε, χαῖρε Ἥλιε, χαῖρε Γαβριήλ, χαῖρε Ῥαφαήλ, χαῖρε

Μιχαήλ, χαῖρε σύμπαντα. "Hail, Helios! Hail, Helios! Hail, Gabriel! Hail, Raphael! Hail, Michael! Hail, whole universe!"

3.2 In particular: "I adjure you, Michael, archangel of the earth" –
P.Princ. II 102 = *Suppl.Mag.* I 29 and the archangel Michael

So far, and due to the limited space available for a study like the present one, it was only possible to single out thematic emphases that provide a – more or less – structured overview of the particularities of Michael, the archangel, in the magical papyri. For a full assessment, however, the complete texts would always have to be considered. Admittedly, such a methodologically appropriate approach would cause severe problems in regard to the length and complexity of some of the magical testimonies that were already briefly discussed.³¹ Nevertheless, in order to give an impression of such a papyrus (and its constituent textual passages) and to demonstrate which elements a magical papyrus that invokes the archangel Michael comprises, at least one example, *P.Princ.* II 107 = *Suppl.Mag.* I 29, should be cited in full. For the readers' convenience it is presented in an English translation³² to avoid the matters of reading doubtful letters and reconstructing missing words and textual passages in the Greek text:³³

"† - - - (lines 3 ff.) fever with shivering – I adjure you, Michaël, archangel |⁴ of the earth – quotidian or nocturnal or quartan; by the almighty Sabaôth, no longer fasten to the soul of the wearer (of this amulet) nor to his whole body. |⁸ I adjure you and the dead, deliver Taiolles, daughter of Isidoros, - - -.' 'He who dwells in the help of the Highest will reside in the shelter of the God of heaven. He will say |¹² to God < > and my refuge < > and my helper, I put my trust in him.' 'Our father who art in heaven, hallowed < > thy will, < > our daily bread.' 'Holy |¹⁶ holy Lord Sabaôth: heaven and earth are full of your holy glory.' *Aniaadaiia*, Michaël, the Lord of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Elôei, Ele, Sabaôth, |²⁰ Ôel."

The papyrus from the 5th or 6th century of unknown provenance is an amulet against fever, a common purpose to write amulets for, also

31 The Great Magical Papyrus of Paris (*PGM* IV) is probably the extreme case in this respect.

32 Translation reprinted from Kraus, Manuscripts 257-258, and *Suppl.Mag.* I 29. Compare the English translation by Kotansky, *PGM* LXXXIII. 1-20 300, who renders line 17 as follows: "holy is the one of glory" according to Kase's transcription in the *editio princeps* that was corrected by Daniel and Maltomini in *Suppl.Mag.*

33 For a critical transcription with doubtful letters, reconstructions, and a full-scale commentary and discussion of the main features of the papyrus see Kraus, Manuscripts 254-266.

Christian ones. Although there is God ('the almighty Sabaôth') behind him, it is Michael who is adjured together with the dead to be active and to help Taiolles to get rid of her fever (chills). The invocation to the dead (ὁρκίζω σε καὶ νεκρούς), however, might remind of the deceased saints but certainly refers to the relationship between Christianity and cults of the dead in those days, especially in Egypt. The selection of biblical and liturgical passages that follow makes sense and might have been made on purpose:³⁴ Psalm 90 of the Septuagint is the most popular text to be found on archaeological artefacts, above all on those serving an apotropaic purpose.³⁵ This is only natural according to its first verse(s) that explicitly refer to protection, refuge, and shelter offered by God. The *Lord's Prayer*, basically second in rank of texts to be applied to magical purposes, is faulty here (cf. the omission of τὸ ὄνομά σου and the slightly different meaning), but it is often used together with Psalm 90 on amulets, with which it even intensifies the direct invocation to God in this context. The praise that follows ("Holy ...") represents the *Liturgia Marci* consisting of the *trisagion* followed by a doxology. That might have made a perfect ending, but a mysterious letter combination, Michael, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and some divine names (possibly partly from a Hebrew background) mark the end of the papyrus. Here again, just as in the beginning, we have signs for a mixture of religious notions and ideas typical of magical papyri from (late) antiquity; and Michael, the archangel, again serves as a protagonist in the fight against evil powers, diseases included, and as somebody common people of the time could send their requests for help and assistance. As we already saw: for the people it often did not play a role, if they intermingled elements from different religious backgrounds with each other. Possibly, they were not even aware of the fact that they did so or that these elements actually stem from different religious conceptions.

34 Against Kotansky, *PGM LXXXIII*. 1-20 300: "In fact, the incoherent manner by which the verses are quoted suggests that the writer was ignorant of their context and meaning."

35 See Kraus, *Septuaginta-Psalm 90 39-72*; Kraus, *Ein byzantinisches Amulett-Armband*.

4. Concluding remark

The papyrus testimonies referred to in this descriptive study speak for themselves. The picture they paint of the use of the archangel Michael is rather colourful and peculiar. What the magical papyri have to say about Michael, and with him about angels in general, appears to be random and more inconsistent than systematic and consistent. However, this is what they may represent at a first glance. A more closer and longer look prompts to recognize that some structures and tendencies are at work and gradually become visible. The interrelation between the archangel Michael and specific cults, from an inner-Christian perspective denominated as 'pagan', above all those connected with Apollo, Abrasax (and all the deities linked with him), Helios, and Osiris, becomes apparent. Such an interrelation that occasionally ended up in intermingling and alloying distinctive deities and the like and diverse conceptions that are linked with them is a natural phenomenon in geographical areas in which various and varied religious ideas and convictions are present.

Of course, the biblical background is of major significance for the application of Michael in magical contexts, though it is rarely explicitly mentioned or even cited. Michael's predominant position³⁶ stems from that background and has at least partly been internalized by the people, who bring in their own traditional religious notions and beliefs. More significant, and even appalling to some scholars of the classics and early Christianity,³⁷ is that the magical papyri propose a view of antiquity and early Christianity that appears to be different to the splendour works of classic literature and presumable 'orthodox' Christianity may represent. But it is an inescapable fact that the "Greek magical papyri are, however, original documents and primary sources. Their discovery is as important for Greco-Roman religions as is the discovery of the Qumran texts for Judaism or the Nag Hammadi library for Gnosticism."³⁸ And this is valid for magical papyri in Coptic, Demotic and any other language of the relevant periods of time as well. These papyri are indispensable witnesses to both, a time in which religious conceptions were exceptionally heterogeneous in some places and to real people living then and to their ideas, notions, and beliefs, or, in less abstract terms, occasionally even to their feelings, fears, and innermost desires.

36 But, for instance, see above, n. 22-23.

37 See above, n. 3 and 19.

38 Betz, Introduction xlii.

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